

***Christ United Methodist Church
Harlem at Saratoga
Amherst, New York***

“Living Christ’s ways and exploding with love and service”

UPDATE

February 18, 2014

EVERYONE is WELCOME

EVERY SUNDAY AT CHRIST CHURCH

9:00 – Praise Celebration Worship

10:00 – FaithXpress/soul Strength/AOL (Adult Opportunities for Learning)

11:00 – Traditional Style Worship

Bring a Friend this week and share the Love and Grace of God!

Visit us on the World Wide Web at: www.Christchurchamherst.org

716-839-2460

Dr. B.J.’s blog is www.drbjthoughts.blogspot.com

Hi Everyone:

I’ve been preaching through the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22) since the first of the year. There are nine of them: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness (humility) and self control (temperance). Fruit is not worked for it is formed and grown. In the life of the Christ follower the fruit is grown in us through our living our lives in Christ and in Christian community. It is the byproduct of the life of faith. I am aware that it is harder to grow some things than others. Eggplant grew well in the parsonage side lot a few summers ago. Hot peppers and kale also grow well there. I didn’t do so well with bell peppers. Tomatoes did exceptionally well (another night shade variety like the egg plant, I suspect). Causes for this are many: the amount of available water and sunlight; the condition of the seed or plant when it was planted; and, ultimately, the state and

fertility of the soil. These same conditions apply to fruit being formed in us as well. Some of the fruit of the spirit is formed easily: love seems to come easy and it is relatively easy for me to have faith. Other fruit forms with greater difficulty: patience is a struggle and, frankly, this week's "humility/gentleness" does not come easily either. The key to this process is to remember that it is a process. Some areas of our lives transform easily other areas of our lives transform with greater difficulty. Oh, and don't forget we are all different. What formed easy in me may be harder for others what is formed with difficulty in me may, in fact, be easier for others. I have long suspected that this is the reason for Christian community. Alone our strengths and weaknesses are glaring. In community we can work to our strengths and, together, can minimize our weaknesses.

Here is what is happening at Church:

1. Attendance last Sunday was about 120 (not too bad for a wintry long weekend). Thank you, everyone, for your faithfulness and support.

2. This Sunday I will be preaching about the fruit of the spirit, translated in the NRSV as "Gentleness". The Greek is more akin to the worlds "meekness" or "humility." What does it mean to be humble or meek? I suspect most of us identify these words with weakness (as, by the way, did the first century world). We get images of Caspar Milquetoast or some whimpering simpering self deprecating person who, on the best of days, would be described as spineless. What we learn when we study meekness and humility is something very very different. I will be looking at Philippians 2:1-11 as an insight into humility/gentleness/meekness.

3. In our prayers: Mitch Mooney is having surgery (again) this afternoon; Guy Castellino 's mother, Kathy, is at Suburban hospital; Sean Brown is expected to be heading home to Buffalo by week's end; Peggy Bermudez (recovering from Surgery); Fred Painton, Guy Castellino, Mitch Mooney, Bim Rowlands, Glenn Hurst, Nicky Sebastiano, Marian Steve, Ruth Kitson, Shirley Downey, Ed Maker, Alice Schmidt and Diane Lovejoy. Remember those who are serving in the military (especially Alex and Ian). Remember those who are looking for work. Remember families in crisis. Remember your church and our leaders.

4. This Week at Christ Church:

Tuesday, February 18 – 7:30 Trustee Meeting

Wednesday, February 19 – 7:30 Choir Rehearsal

Thursday February 20 – 9:30 – Caller Collation Team

10:00 – Bible Study

Friday, February 21 – 10:00 – Books We have Loved

Monday, February 24 – 6:00 – 9:00 Worship Team Rehearsal

Tuesday, February 25 – 7:00 Worship/Altar Guild meeting

5. Coming on February 28 – “Mission Youth” first meeting Pizza Party for teens and parents at Pastor BJ’s house at 6:30 p.m. See Sally or BJ for details.

6. FOOD PANTRY COLLECTION: Powdered Drinks (Milk, Juice, etc.)

7. Next Men’s Pre- work gathering is Thursday, February 27 at the Pancake House on Main Street in Williamsville (at 7:00).

8. The new Church Directories are now available. If you were photographed for the directory your new book is available through the church office or they are on at a table in the parlor on Sunday mornings. If you were not photographed and would like a directory see Janelle, she has extras.

Online Church Directory is now available. A new tool to enable us all to stay in touch. If you wish to access the church directory from our website, please contact Janelle (839-2460) in the church office for your unique username and password.

9. Happy Birthday this week:

February 20 – Ben Bermudez

February 21 – Matthew Ronan

February 23 – Abigail Johnson,

February 25 -- Viki Smith

February 26 – Caroline Hess; Linda Parete,

10. Through the Bible in 2014

February 18 – Exodus 4-6

February 19 – Exodus 7-8 and Mark 16

February 20 – Exodus 9-11; 1 Thessalonians 1

February 21 – Exodus 12-13; 1 Thessalonians 2

February 22 – Exodus 14-15; 1 Thessalonians 3

February 23 – Exodus 16-18; 1 Thessalonians 4

February 24 – Exodus 19-20; 1 Thessalonians 5

February 25 – Exodus 21-22; 2 Thessalonians 1

February 26 – Exodus 23-24; 2 Thessalonians 2

February 27 – Exodus 25-26; 2 Thessalonians 3

February 28 – Exodus 27-28; Philemon

11. LENTEN SUPPER AND STUDY

Will run from March 5 (Ash Wednesday) through April 9 from 5:30 to 7:30. Everyone is invited to use the Lenten season to create a space in your life that will enable you to grow deeper in your faith. Following a shared meal we will participate in a mini retreat reflecting on season Bible readings and personal stories that will help us apply them to our own lives. Using the book, God's Gift of Life, by Larry Beman, we'll be guided to experience the blessings of life given to us through the life, suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Rev. Beman served as an Associate Pastor at Christ Church. Books are available through Sally Pollard – suggested donation of \$5.

MARCH 5 is **Ash Wednesday** worship with the imposition of ashes will be at 7:00

12 MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunity 1: We need people to sign up to host morning coffee hour – sign up is outside the Kitchen.

Opportunity 2: A chart has been posted in Crafts Hall for those wishing to sign up to donate flowers for worship in 2014.

Opportunity 3: We are putting together a worship “creative” team. Want to be a part of this group? Let BJ know.

13. Mission Opportunities:

Opportunity 1: **UGANDA 2014**. I am planning to travel in early October this Fall to continue our work in Uganda. Is God Calling you to join me? This journey is 9 months away so I will need to know soon – Tickets will likely be purchased in March/April.

Opportunity 2: Rev. Davis Matovu (our Uganda Mission partner) will be in the US in April and May and will be preaching at Christ Church on the 2nd Sunday of May. Watch for more.

Opportunity 3: Uganda Orphans – it is time to re-sponsor our Kirimandagi orphans. The cost is \$125/year. Write the check to Christ Church and put in the memo line “Uganda Orphan”. See Janelle for more information. **We have a couple of unsponsored children . . . want in see Janelle.**

Opportunity 4: MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY is only 14 weeks from Sunday . . . many new projects are being planned.

14. SHOES *Christ United Methodist Church Launches Shoe Drive to Support Microenterprise in Developing Nations, and Help the Environment*

The public is invited to Make A Difference by donating used shoes February 18 – May 18

Christ United Methodist Church is conducting a shoe collection drive on February 18 – May 18 to benefit small business ventures in developing nations and keeping old shoes out of local landfills. Individuals can help by donating used shoes at Christ Church.

In the US alone, approximately 630 million pairs of shoes are thrown away per year. The materials used to manufacture a pair of shoes are created from chemical compounds that create health hazards when left to disintegrate openly or in landfills. By donating your used shoes to the Shoe Drive, your shoes are given a second chance to make a difference. All donated shoes will be redistributed to microenterprise partners and used in developing nations for impoverished people to start, maintain, and grow a unique business opportunity to feed, clothe, and house their families. The additional advantage of this shoe collection is diverting shoes from the waste stream and landfills and creating commerce and sustainability in peoples' lives.

The shoe drive is just one part of Christ Church's annual "Make A Difference" Day, which takes place on Sunday, May 18. On site will be trucks collecting kitchen appliances for Habitat for Humanity, household goods to benefit Journey's End refugee resettlement, clothing for Asbury Shalom Zone located on the west side of Buffalo and a Shred-It truck provided by our community partner, Allaire Financial Strategies. Bring your old files and papers to be shredded onsite in a safe secure manner.

Members of the community are invited to make a difference in the lives of others by donating items no longer needed or wanted. They may also help by joining us on May 18 anytime between 10am to 1pm to welcome neighbors, sort items and load the trucks. Contact Sally Pollard at Christ Church with your questions, 839-2460.

15. Christ Church is blessed with excellent gathering and fellowship space. One of the most popular is the **Café on Sunday morning**. The café provides hot and cold beverages and tasty snacks before and following our Sunday worship gatherings. What makes this work is a lot of volunteers who "Host" the café by preparing coffee/tea, etc. and putting the snacks out and then cleaning up afterwards. Would you like to help in this vital hospitality ministry of our Church? Contact Sally Pollard at 839-2460 or by signing up on the sheet posted on the bulletin board in the Café.

Parting Thought:

A definition of insanity, usually attributed to Albert Einstein, says: “it is insane to believe that if you continue to do the same thing the same way eventually you’ll get a different result.” This quote shows up in lots of interesting places but the most popular is in conversations around church renewal and growth. Most of the main line congregations (of whom we are most definitely one) came of age at the end of the Christendom era in the United States. We were born of a time of volunteering and joining and when big institutions were the preferred and favored way to be about mission and ministry. As such we function very much like a command and control center that resists substantive change and new direction. Transformation is handicapped by a desire to return to what was or by those who are personally vested in maintaining the status quo (even if status quo is slow and inevitable death). The reality the Christian church faces today is that, at least in the United States, we are proclaiming the eternal message of the gospel in language, style and expectations that do not effectively reach post Christendom human beings. Christ Church carries some of the vestiges (but it is nowhere near as bad off as some churches I have worked with). The reality we face is that we have to be better, do better and communicate the gospel better and in ways that the generations coming up can understand. I have long suspected that the resistance to change is what is behind Jesus’ metaphor of not putting new wine into old wine skins (Matthew 9:17). What do you think? Like Ezekiel (see chapter 37) we find ourselves asking can these dry bones live? We ponder the answer and wonder if there is any hope. Is there balm in Gilead? Is new life possible?

. . . . in case you are wondering. I believe the answer is YES!!! But it won’t be easy. Pray with me, for me, and roll up those sleeves! And join the conversation, dreaming and planning on 2nd Mondays at 7:00 (next gathering is March 10).

I’ll see you when the Community of Faith gathers,

BJ Norrix, lead servant (ok Mac, singer too), missionary, coach

This email is a communication ministry of the Christ United Methodist Church, Amherst, New York. If you do not wish to receive this email please let me know.